OPINION

BY SADIQ KARIM SOOFI

Faith and reason

WHY does the Quran never refer to the human brain? Even when it speaks of understanding and comprehension, it points towards the human heart (the *qalb*) as the seat of those activities. For those who doubt that religion can ever be intellectually convincing, this feature is good evidence for their position that faith ultimately involves a 'blind' leap into the realm of feelings and emotions. In other words, for them, faith involves an abandonment of logical rationality.

But that is not quite what the Christian philosopher Kierkegaard meant when he famously remarked, "Where reason is exhausted, faith begins". What Kierkegaard was trying to say was that in the search for truth and wisdom, reasoning and logic can only take us so far. When the seeker of knowledge is returned dissatisfied from every avenue of reason he has pursued, his search for certain knowledge ultimately thrusts his soul into the depths of faith.

However, this leap of faith isn't actually "blind" or "irrational" as some make it out to be. While it is true that faith involves an overcoming of reason, this overcoming is actually guided by another faculty of the intellect: intuition.

Carl Jung was once asked whether he believed in God as a child, to which he replied in the affirmative. He was then asked whether he still believed in the same way. He paused and, after a moment of introspection, replied: "I *know*. I needn't *believe*. I *know*." Jung was referring to a kind of knowledge deeper than the kind we acquire through the rational activity of our logical mind: knowledge by intuition.

So what exactly is this intuitive knowledge? To begin with, it cannot be equated with emotions. Where an emotion is fleeting, an intuition is lasting. While extreme emotion involves a suspension of reason, great intuition complements it and completes its activity. Emotions are neither truly cognitive nor truly transformative. An intuition, on the other hand, calls us towards a truth and compels us to live by it.

The seat of intuition is the human heart, the innermost recess of our consciousness, a part of ourselves that always eludes the grasp of scientific attempts to explain it. Intuitive knowledge comes from within ourselves. But it never originates there. It is always received –– as if from a heavenly gateway inside us.

Even though intuition gets a bad name for being 'irrational', it is in fact the anchor of the mind's rational activity. Rationality depends on intuition and, thus, always remains limited in its scope. In order for us to engage in rational thinking, we have to first ensure that our faculty of thinking is a reliable means of accessing true knowledge. This, we cannot rationally prove. For any attempt to prove the reliability of rationality will employ the same rationality whose reliability we would be trying to prove. The circularity of the problem is inescapable.

For any rational thinking to get off the ground, there has to be an initial presumption that the human faculty that makes such thinking possible is trustworthy. This presumption –– this basic intuition –– is, at best, a leap of faith. That does not make it untrue. Intuition is no less reliable than reason. In fact, it tends to furnish knowledge of a degree of certainty that is beyond the reach of reason.

Consider another basic intuition: our knowledge of our own existence. We cannot prove ourselves to ourselves because the thing being proved would be doing the proving. But we *know* that we exist because we intuit our own existence. It is not the kind of knowledge that is open to the possibility of doubt.

> Faith, guided by intuition, is not blind.

So, if basic intuitions are found in the very beginning of logical rationality as its grounding anchors, why should we become so sceptical of intuition when it moves from basic truths to higher-order truths of a spiritual and metaphysical kind? After all, we *know* our thinking to be reliable and we *know* that we exist in much the same way that Jung claimed to *know* God's being. Basic intuitions and spiritual intuitions differ in their order of magnitude, but belong to the same category of knowledge and arise from the same faculty of the intellect.

A holistic view of the intellect, in which there is a place for both rationality and intuition, can help us understand that faith, guided by intuition, is not really blind. True blindness is the denial of intuition as a necessary intellectual faculty and an inescapable mode of attaining knowledge.

Kierkegaard, therefore, was merely describing his own journey, in which logical reason, having ventured forth on its own, ultimately returned –– exhausted and defeated –– to the same 'blind' heart where its journey had first begun. The hand of intuition, having first aided reason, finally sustains the individual when reason can no longer bear his weight. ■

The writer studies law at Oxford.
sksoofi49@gmail.com

BY AASIM SAJJAD AKHTAR

Revolution today

IT is New Year's Day, 2050. Pakistan's 400 million people make it the world's third most populous country. A four-decade-long youth bulge is as intense as ever, with half of the labour force between the ages of 15 and 29. Daily life is a rat race, punctuated by climate breakdown events and insurgencies. The state plays Leviathan under the guise of order.

As thought experiments go, projecting 24 years into the future on the basis of where we find ourselves today is no grand act of imagination. Only government propagandists and some mainstream commentators still argue that 'Pakistan is turning a corner'. Most serious analyses acknowledge that the pace of economic, political, and social decay is hastening. Why engage in such gloomy scenarios? They compel us, I think, to imagine trajectories which are not only hopeful, but even revolutionary.

The idea of revolution has taken a beating since the end of the Cold War. US imperialism has backed a host of 'coloured revolutions' to roll back the legacies of the historic socialist revolutions and national liberation struggles of what Eric Hobsbawm called the short 20th century.

Here in Pakistan, where the left has been criminalised from the get-go, the meaning of revolution has been hollowed out further since the turn of the century by dictators like Musharraf and parachuted charlatans like Tahirul Qadri. Yet, a large number of digitally savvy youth consciously desire political transformation. The term 'Gen Z revolt' has gained great currency recently, following events in Bangladesh, Nepal, Madagascar, and Sri Lanka, where young people have exercised collective agency to overthrow incumbent regimes.

There is something heady about the fact that an otherwise amorphous, digitally connected cross-section of young people can crystallise into such a powerful force. But experience confirms that popular mobilisations can easily be co-opted, corrupted, or thwarted by the absence of a shared vision for substantive transformation.

The recently scripted 'Gen Z revolt' in Mexico that reads like a Washington-backed 'coloured revolution' is only the most prominent example. Closer to home, Bangladesh's 'revolution' has increasingly turned sour, perhaps unsurprisingly given the dubious politics of figureheads like Muhammad Younus.

How, then, do we make sense of this contradictory political landscape? Young political subjects are certainly willing and able to name structures of power, and even challenge them. But without romanticising the socialist revolutions and decolonisation movements of the past, what we miss today are organised mass parties with a clear ideological agenda. It is one thing to coalesce around the wrongs of the system on digital networks, but quite another to organise at the grassroots to put in place an alternative socioeconomic and political system.

We may not see another era of mass parties, featuring trade unions and popular peasant organisations. Successful political entities that claim mass membership today largely rely on effective digital mobilisation strategies without necessarily sustaining parallel grassroots organisation. The PTI is the most obvious example. Indeed, it embodies many of the fundamental contradictions of the prototypical online Gen Z subject. Despite all that has happened since April 2022, is the 'youth' that catapulted the PTI to prominence 15 years ago now decisively opposed to Pakistan's militarised and imperialised structure of power? Or is it still liable to co-option in intra-elite factional struggles?

> The idea of revolution has taken a beating.

Whatever the PTI's future, there are still enough reasons to believe that Pakistan's young working masses can come together to avert the dystopic scenario outlined at the outset. The crucial ideological pillars of a collective political project would read like this: 1) a developmental trajectory beyond capitalism featuring mass redistribution, job-creating industrialisation, and ecological regeneration; 2) an end to the brutalisation of ethnic peripheries and the crafting of a new, multinational identity; 3) ending the hegemony of the national security apparatus, decolonisation of Pakistani statecraft, and enshrining people's needs as the object of state policy; 4) a commitment to redressing patriarchal violence — structural and physical — at all levels of state and society; 5) articulation of anti-imperialism and principles of non-alignment in foreign ties by discontinuing the state's historical policies of auctioning the country's geostrategic location, its natural resources, and labour for imperialist rents.

We are far from realising such an ideological agenda at present. But no matter how intellectually pessimistic we must be in the face of dark realities, we can retain a modicum of hope that such revolutionary horizons can still exist. ■

The writer teaches at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

FROM THE PAST PAGES OF DAWN

1976 | Fifty years ago

Polls on schedule: Bhutto

KARACHI: The Prime Minister, Mr Z.A. Bhutto, said yesterday [Jan 1] that general elections will be held according to the Constitution, adding that the Government was committed to holding fair ... elections. … The Chairman of the PPP was addressing about 1,000 party workers ... on the lawns of the Governor House. … The Prime Minister recalled that during the life time of Shaheed-i-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan general elections were followed by a year-long post-election campaigning that spread the poison of provincialism and ideas against the solidarity ... of the country were preached. He also said that one reason for the separation of East Pakistan was that a similar freedom was allowed after the 1970 elections. — Staff reporter

[News agencies add:] … Mr. Bhutto declared amidst full-throated slogans … that the PPP would participate in the next general elections and hoped that the workers, including women, working hard shoulder to shoulder, will bring victory to the PPP as one party from Khyber to Karachi. … He said, "we are against that politics under which voters are coerced, intimidated, harassed or dictated".

1951 | Seventy-five years ago

No satisfactory response

KARACHI: Although there was feverish activity on Monday [Jan 1] morning on the part of the diplomatic representatives in Karachi of the UK, Canada and Australia, and the Pakistan Cabinet held three and a half hour meeting lasting until well after 2 p.m., and another meeting in the evening, the prospect of Mr Liaquat Ali Khan going to London was no brighter than it had been 24 hours previously. It is believed that a communication was since received from Whitehall, but that its terms were not much more satisfactory than those which had reached Karachi earlier.

Meanwhile considerable surprise was felt in Karachi at authentic reports from New Delhi that Mr Attlee had not even communicated with Pandit Nehru on the subject of the Pakistan Prime Minister's desire that Kashmir should be discussed at the London Conference.

The position appears to be that Mr Liaquat Ali Khan will not consider it worthwhile going to London ... unless he has been given a categorical assurance that the Kashmir issue will be discussed not merely between Mr Attlee, Pandit Nehru and himself — as Mr Attlee is reported to have suggested — but by all the participants in the Prime Ministers' Conference. — *Dawn* political correspondent

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@dawn.com

Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All letters should carry the writer's address, CNIC and phone numbers.

Renewed hope in the energy sector

PAKISTAN has successfully revived its offshore exploration efforts after a hiatus of nearly two decades. The recently launched offshore bid round has attracted strong interest from both domestic and international companies, signalling renewed confidence in the country's energy sector. The government plans to drill its first offshore oil well in March next year in the eastern offshore Indus Block C near Sujawal district, and, depending on positive results, as many as 25 additional wells could eventually follow.

In October, the government awarded 23 offshore exploratory blocks to four consortia led by domestic exploration and production companies. Covering nearly 53,500 square kilometres across the Indus and Makran basins, these blocks will undergo geological and geophysical surveys, seismic data acquisition, and detailed interpretation over the next three years to identify drilling prospects. Exploratory drilling in the subsequent phase will ultimately determine the commercial viability of any discoveries.

A landmark feature of this bid round is the involvement of foreign entities, including those from Turkiye and Hong Kong. In addition to foreign capital, these awards are expected to bring advanced offshore technology to Pakistan. In an environment marked by dwindling foreign investment, this renewed interest is a welcome development.

Over the last decade, Pakistan's onshore exploration and production (E&P) sector has experienced significant setbacks as several major international companies either exited the market, or scaled down operations. Against this backdrop, the confidence demonstrated by foreign partners in the offshore sector is rather encouraging.

As of June 30, Pakistan had consumed nearly 81 per cent of its proven oil reserves of 1,245 million barrels, leaving about 353 million barrels recoverable after recent discoveries and revisions. At current production levels of 60,000-75,000 barrels per day, against a demand of around 400,000 barrels, the remaining reserves may last only 15 years, forcing annual oil imports worth over $12 billion.

Natural gas reserves show a similar decline: of the original 63.24 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of recoverable resources, 43.73 TCF have already been produced, leaving about 19 TCF. With output falling from mature fields and no major new finds, these reserves, too, may not last beyond another 15 years, compelling Pakistan to import around 8.7 billion cubic metres of LNG annually.

Pakistan's offshore region, comprising the Indus and Makran basins, has seen limited exploration. Only 18 wells have been drilled since independence; none commercially successful. Early efforts by some companies provided valuable geological information, but yielded no discoveries. The most recent attempt, the Kekra-1 well drilled in 2019, also failed, prompting the driller's exit. A 2023 offering of 12 offshore blocks likewise attracted no bids.

Spanning almost 300,000 square kilometres and bordering energy-rich neighbours, such as Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Iran, Pakistan's offshore region remains geologically promising despite earlier disappointments. In September 2024, reports indicated that Pakistan may hold significant offshore oil and gas deposits.

Pakistan has waited many decades for a breakthrough in offshore exploration. The coming years will determine whether this renewed push becomes a historic success, or another missed opportunity. For now, however, the sense of possibility is greater than it has been in a more than a generation, and that alone is a step forward.

Hussain Ahmad Siddiqui
Islamabad

Helping hands

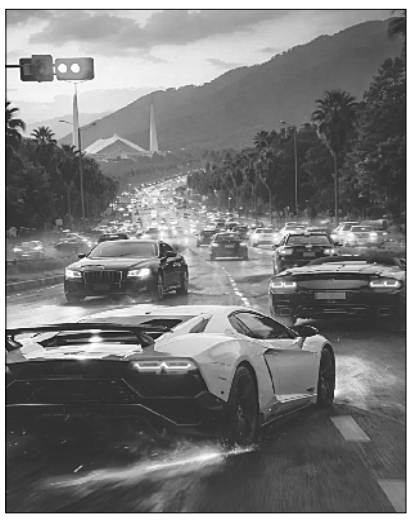
WINTER is not really a pleasant season for everyone. While we enjoy its beauty wrapped in warm blankets in our comfortable homes, countless children, mostly orphans, struggle to survive without even a single blanket. We cannot truly imagine what they endure in the biting cold. As we celebrate winter as a 'wonderful season', they spend their nights trembling along roadsides, fighting harsh winds with nothing to protect them.

The reality is painful: winter is not the same for everyone. We live in warm houses, surrounded by comfort, while those innocent children suffer in silence. Sadly, we have failed as a nation to support our own people. We may not be able to provide them luxury homes, but we can offer them one simple gift; a blanket.

Even a small act of kindness can bring warmth, comfort and smile to a child who has nothing. A single blanket may seem ordinary to us, but for them, it can mean survival in harsh weather. Let us become the reason someone feels safe this winter. Sometimes, even the smallest gesture becomes a life-changing blessing.

Waseem Ahmed
Tump

Fast-moving cars



MORE people die in road accidents in Pakistan every year than in all other crimes put together, including terrorism. Unfortunately, enforcement of traffic laws has never been the priority of the rulers for the simple reason that most of the culprits belong to the elite class.

In Islamabad, a large vehicle moving at a frighteningly high speed is a common sight on Iran Avenue. Those who have to take a left turn drive on the right-most lane and take the left turn without compromising the car's speed. This dangerous manoeuvre is executed multiple times every day. The roundabout at the starting point of Iran Avenue displays an ugly chaos with no one caring about the traffic coming from the right side.

It is understood that millions of rupees were spent on the installation of cameras across the federal capital, but no one has ever been booked for violation of the traffic laws with the help of these cameras. The traffic police force usually complains about shortage of staff, but that is not a valid excuse for having no control at all on the capital's busy roads.

The rulers need to understand that road terror has become more alarming for the residents of the federal capital than suicide attacks.

The authorities concerned should take quick and effective measures to protect the citizens from the menace of road terror.

Sikander Aqeel Ansari
Islamabad

A futile exercise

THE government's introduction of e-stamp papers is a welcome step aimed at stopping fraud and bringing transparency to official documentation. People have welcomed the move because it promised convenience, accountability and an end to the old stamp-paper mafia. But what this really means on the ground is a different story.

The banks responsible for issuing e-stamps often push applicants into long and unnecessary delays, saying the 'printer is not working', or the 'system is down', or the 'paper is not available'. They ask people to come back after hours or even the next day. A process designed to take minutes ends up consuming several hours.

There is a simple solution. People should be able to generate the challan, pay it online or at any bank, instantly receive their e-stamp with a secure barcode or QR code, and print it on any standard printer. This would save time, reduce rush at banks and make the system truly digital.

The purpose of e-stamp is defeated if people still face avoidable obstacles. The authorities concerned must fix these operational issues and move towards a fully online, user-friendly mechanism. Only then will the initiative fulfil its promise of making lawful documentation easier instead of more frustrating.

Ahsan ul Haque
Karachi

KWSC medical crisis

THE medical facility for employees and pensioners of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWSC) is in a severely pathetic state. My mother, a pensioner, needs regular medication that costs Rs3,000 twice a week. The situation has worsened drastically following the KWSC's abrupt suspension of medical facilities. This means a life-saving treatment has now become a luxury not many can afford.

Ironically, while payments to panel medical institutions remain frozen, various reports allegedly suggest that substantial advanced payments are being diverted to insurance companies under some new, but largely ineffective medical insurance scheme. This transition would only add to the grievances of those who solely rely on direct medical support.

Furthermore, the annual medical budget is frequently curtailed. There are persistent allegations that funds allocated for employees' and pensioners' medical care are being diverted to unrelated projects. This is pathetic, showing a careless attitude of a bureaucratic leadership towards what is an already fragile low-income class.

Saleem Ghani
Karachi

▶ **OBJECTIONS APLENTY:** Visiting the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) offices often subjects citizens to a barrage of unnecessary objections. One such requirement is asking individuals to bring their brothers and sisters — sometimes residing in other cities — for thumb verification during the CNIC renewal process. This demand is particularly distressing for the elderly. The issue is further aggravated when photographs of elderly individuals, especially women who in many cases do not have photographs on their original CNICs, are mistakenly replaced with someone else's. It becomes a nuisance when individuals are dragged into cases involving family disputes. Nadra should resolve such issues at least for the elderly who are often unable to pay frequent visits to Nadra offices.
Sarah Ahsan
Karachi

▶ **KARACHI NEEDS WATER:** The Hub Dam is a major water source for both Hub and Karachi. The water from the dam flows to Karachi through the Hub Canal. Due to heavy monsoon, the canal gets damaged, slashing 60 per cent of water to Karachi. Pipelines are damaged and under repair. Even when Hub has water, it does not reach Karachi due to poor infrastructure and management. City residents have to rely on tankers, industries suffer, and daily life becomes difficult. Overall, water is available most of times, but delivery is the problem. Proper management and repairs are needed. The government should improve its performance in this critical regard.
Sana Ishaq
Hub

▶ **PUBLIC LIBRARY:** There is only one public library in entire Pasni city. Students from far and wide visit the place, but the library does not have enough furniture to facilitate students. A cluster of old and damaged chairs is all that the library has currently. During summers, students face even more problems as there are no fans and drinking water. The authorities must provide basic facilities to the library.
Ameer Lal Baloch
Pasni

External Ombudsman

Veteran journalist Muhammad Ali Siddiqi is *Dawn's* External Ombudsman (DEO). His duty is to attend to our readers' complaints, and to respond to them professionally. DEO is the investigating authority to whom all complaints can be referred, and it is DEO who takes notice of any alleged violations of *Dawn's* code of ethics, and informs the Editor for appropriate action.
Email: dawnombudsman@gmail.com